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Attorneys for Plaintiff

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Laura H. Hopkins	Case No.: '11CV1106 H CAB		
Plaintiff, v. CMRE Financial Services, Inc., and North Coast Pathology Medical Group, Inc.	Complaint For Damages		
	Jury Trial Demanded		

Introduction

1. The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy. Congress wrote the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. (hereinafter "FDCPA"), to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors,

- to ensure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses.
- 2. The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The Legislature has further determined that there is a need to ensure that debt collectors exercise this responsibility with fairness, honesty and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.
- 3. Laura H. Hopkins, ("Plaintiff"), through Plaintiff's attorneys, brings this action to challenge the actions of CMRE Financial Services, Inc., and North Coast Pathology Medical Group, Inc., ("Defendants"), with regard to attempts by Defendants to unlawfully and abusively collect a debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff, and this conduct caused Plaintiff damages.
- 4. Plaintiff makes these allegations on information and belief, with the exception of those allegations that pertain to a plaintiff, or to a plaintiff's counsel, which Plaintiff alleges on personal knowledge.
- 5. While many violations are described below with specificity, this Complaint alleges violations of the statutes cited in their entirety.
- 6. Unless otherwise stated, Plaintiff alleges that any violations by Defendants were knowing and intentional, and that Defendants did not maintain procedures reasonably adapted to avoid any such violation.
- 7. For the purpose of this Complaint, unless otherwise indicated, "Defendant(s)" includes all agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors,

assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives and insurers of Defendants named in this caption.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 8. This action arises out of Defendants' violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 et seq. ("FDCPA") and the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, California Civil Code §§ 1788-1788.32 ("RFDCPA").
- 9. Jurisdiction of this Court arises under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331. Supplemental jurisdiction exists for the state law claims, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367 and Rule 18(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- 10. Venue is proper in this Court because a substantial part of the claim arose in California, and Defendants do business within the State of California.
- 11. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391.

PARTIES

- 12. Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in the City of Vista, County of San Diego, State of California.
- 13. Plaintiff is a "consumer," as defined by FDCPA § 803, codified at 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).
- 14. Plaintiff is a "debtor" within the meaning of Civil Code § 1788.2(h), in that she is a natural person from whom the defendants sought to collect a consumer debt alleged to be due and owing.
- 15. Defendant CMRE Financial Services, Inc., (hereinafter "CMRE"), is a corporation operating from an address of 3075 E. Imperial Hwy., Ste. 200, Brea, California, 92821.
- 16. Defendant North Coast Pathology Medical Group, Inc., (hereinafter "NCPMG"), is a corporation operating from an address of 910 W. San Marcos, Ste. 104, San Marcos, California, 92078.

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- Defendant CMRE is a "debt collector," as defined by FDCPA § 803, codified 17. at 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6). See, e.g., Sayyed v. Wolpoff & Abramson, 485 F.3d 226, 228 (4th Cir. 2007).
- 18. Defendant CMRE and Defendant NCPG are each a "debt collector" within the meaning of Civil Code § 1788.2(c), in that Defendants regularly and in the ordinary course of business, on behalf of themselves or others, engaged in acts and practices in connection with the collection of consumer debts, and that none of the Defendants are an attorney nor counselor at law.
- The alleged debt which the Defendants attempted to collect from Plaintiff is a 19. "consumer debt" within the meaning of Civil Code § 1788.2(f), in that it was incurred primarily for personal, family, or household purposes.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- At all times relevant to this matter, Plaintiff was an individual residing within 20. the State of California.
- 21. At all times relevant, Defendants conducted business within the State of California.
- On or before March 17, 2010, Plaintiff incurred a financial obligation that was 22. primarily for personal, family or household purposes, namely, a medical debt with Defendant NCPMG.
- 23. These financial obligations were primarily for personal, family or household purposes and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
- 24. These alleged obligations were money, property, or their equivalent, which is due or owing, or alleged to be due or owing, from a natural person to another person and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(d), and a "consumer debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(f).

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- 25. On or about March 29, 2010, Plaintiff received a statement from Defendant NCPMG claiming Plaintiff owed approximately \$337.25 on her account.
- 26. This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) defines that phrase.
- 27. On or about March 31, 2010, Plaintiff called Defendant NCPMG and disputed her account balance. Plaintiff informed Defendant NCPMG that Plaintiff's insurance carrier, Aetna, had informed Plaintiff that her patient responsibility for the statement was only \$57.90, not \$337.25. Defendant NCPMG told Plaintiff they would place her account "on hold" and investigate.
- On or about May 21, 2010, Plaintiff received another statement from 28. Defendant NCPMG. This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) defines that phrase.
- 29. This statement again stated Plaintiff owed \$337.25. This statement represented the use of an unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect a debt because Defendant NCPMG was attempting to collect an amount when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. This action violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1). Because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692f and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1), Defendant NCPMG violated Cal. Civ. Code 1788.17.
- On or about May 28, 2010, Plaintiff received yet another statement from 30. Defendant NCPMG. This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) defines that phrase.
- This statement once again stated Plaintiff owed \$337.25. 31. This statement represented the use of an unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect a debt because Defendant NCPMG was attempting to collect an amount when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. This action violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f

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- and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1). Because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692f and 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1), Defendant NCPMG violated Cal. Civ. Code 1788.17.
- Sometime thereafter, but before August 2, 2010, the alleged debt was 32. consigned, placed, or otherwise transferred to Defendant CMRE for collection from Plaintiff.
- On or about August 2, 2011, Defendant CMRE mailed a dunning letter to 33. Plaintiff.
- 34. This action, in an attempt to collect a debt, was a "communication" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2), and an "initial communication" consistent with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).
- This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) 35. defines that phrase, and an "initial communication" consistent with Cal. Civ. Code § 1812.700(b).
- In this letter, Defendant CMRE attempted to collect a principal balance of 36. \$337.25, plus interest.
- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE made a false representation 37. concerning the character, amount, or legal status of a debt. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A). Because this violated certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE also used an unfair or 38. unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f. Defendant violated the Rosenthal Act, including Cal. Civil Code § 1788.17 because Defendant CMRE's conduct or omission violated certain portions of Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.

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- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE was also collecting an amount 39. (including any interest, fee, charge, or expense incidental to the principal obligation) when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1). Because this violated certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- On or about August 8, 2010, within the thirty-day period described in 15 40. U.S.C. § 1692(a), Plaintiff notified Defendant CMRE in writing, that this alleged debt, or some portion of it, was disputed. Plaintiff also included a copy of the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) she received from her insurance carrier, Aetna, which explained Plaintiff's responsibility was only \$57.90.
- On or about March 21, 2011, a representative from Defendant CMRE called 41. Plaintiff. Defendant CMRE's representative stated that Plaintiff owed approximately \$376. The representative further stated that Plaintiff's account had been reported to the credit bureaus and the account would "not be coming off" the credit reports "until [Plaintiff] paid the bill." Plaintiff communicated to Defendant CMRE that she had already disputed the debt and never received validation.
- 42. By communicating with Plaintiff by mail before validating the debt, as required pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b), Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g. Because this communication did not comply with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g, this communication also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE made a false representation 43. concerning the character, amount, or legal status of a debt. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A). Because this violated

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- certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 44. Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE also used an unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f. Defendant CMRE violated the Rosenthal Act, including Cal. Civil Code § 1788.17 because Defendant CMRE's conduct or omission violated certain portions of Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.
- 45. Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE was also collecting an amount (including any interest, fee, charge, or expense incidental to the principal obligation) when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1). Because this violated certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 46. Subsequently, Plaintiff obtained a copy of her credit reports and the account that Defendant CMRE had referenced was not listed.
- 47. Consequently, Defendant CMRE's statement that they had reported Plaintiff's account to the credit bureaus was a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of the alleged debt. As such, this action by Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692e(10), and because this action violated the language in 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692e(10), it also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.

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- 48. On or about March 24, 2011, Plaintiff wrote Defendant CMRE. Plaintiff again disputed the debt and asked for validation.
- 49. In response, on or about April 6, 2011, Defendant CMRE wrote Plaintiff a letter. In this letter, Defendant CMRE stated that Plaintiff owed a total of \$377.63. Included in this amount, was \$40.38 in interest.
- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE made a false representation 50. concerning the character, amount, or legal status of a debt. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A). Because this violated certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE also used an unfair or 51. unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f. Defendant CMRE violated the Rosenthal Act, including Cal. Civil Code § 1788.17 because Defendant CMRE's conduct or omission violated certain portions of Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.
- 52. Through this conduct, Defendant CMRE was also collecting an amount (including any interest, fee, charge, or expense incidental to the principal obligation) when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. Consequently, Defendant CMRE violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1). Because this violated certain portions of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act as these portions are incorporated by reference in the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, through California Civil Code § 1788.17, this conduct or omission violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.

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FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT (FDCPA)

15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 ET SEQ.

AGAINST DEFENDANT CMRE

- Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference, all other 53. paragraphs.
- The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations 54. of the FDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq.
- As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to 55. statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from Defendant CMRE.

COUNT II

ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT (RFDCPA)

CAL. CIV. CODE §§ 1788-1788.32

AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS

- 56. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference, all other paragraphs.
- 57. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the RFDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the RFDCPA, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788-1788.32.
- 58. As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to statutory damages for a knowing or willful violation in the amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) from Defendants.

San Diego, California

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WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against Defendants, and Plaintiff be awarded damages from Defendants, as follows:

- An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. \$ 1692k(a)(2)(A) against Defendant CMRE;
- An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) against Defendant CMRE;
- An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b) against all Defendants;
- An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) against all Defendants;
- Any and all other relief that the Court deems just and proper.
- 59. Pursuant to the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, Plaintiff is entitled to, and demands, a trial by jury.

Respectfully submitted,

MinCal Consumer Law Group

By: <u>s/Ehson Salaami</u>
Ehson Salaami, Esq.
Attorney for Plaintiff
E-mail: ehson@mincal.com

Case 3:11-cv-01106-H-KSC Document 1 Filed 05/19/11 PageID.12 Page 12 of 12 CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Laura H. Hopkins (b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				DEFENDANTS CMRE Financial Servicse, Inc., and North Coast Pathology Medical Group, Inc.		
				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.		
(c) Attorney's (Firm Name MinCal Consumer Law 1630 Copa De Oro Dr.,	Address, and Telephone Numb Group (888-678-555 Ste. A, San Diego, 0	^{er)} 50) CA 92037		Attorneys (If Known)		'11CV1106 H CAB
II. BASIS OF JURISD	ICTION (Place an "X"	in One Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF	PRINCIPAL PARTI	ES(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	■ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government	Not a Party)			PTF DEF	and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF or Principal Place
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	ip of Parties in Item III)			of Busines	and Principal Place 5 5 5 5 In Another State
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IV. NATURE OF SUI			E	NDEELTHDE/DEXIAL TV	D A NIZDY IDTOV	OTHER CTATHTEC
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Ճ 1 Original □ 2 Re	Cite the U.S. Civil St. 15 U.S.C. § 16	Appellate Court tute under which you a 2 et seq.	Reor	pened anot (spe	nsferred from ther district cify) nal statutes unless diversit	ation Judgment
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	FDCPA	IS A CLASS ACTIO	N D	EMAND \$	CHECK YES	only if demanded in complaint: ND: Yes No
VIII. RELATED CASE IF ANY		JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
DATE		SIGNATURE OF A	TTORNEY	OF RECORD		
5/19/2011		s/Ehson Salaaı	mi			
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY RECEIPT # A	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE	MAC	G. JUDGE